**ADAM WARREN INTERVIEW!**

# Manga NEWSWATCH 5

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS!™

# Manga NEWSWATCH 5

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# Editorial

As promised, it's our special **Dirty Pair issue!** Along with a beautiful Yuri and Kei cover by Adam Warren and Robert DeJesus, we've got an exclusive interview with the main man behind everybody's favorite dynamic duo, Mr. Warren himself. Plus, as a treat, we have a special Adam Warren sketch book at the end of the issue. But that's not all. Robert Gibson tosses out a history of anime and manga fandom, Dave Merrill gives you his opinion about *Macross II*, the movie (shouldn't everybody?), and we say farewell to editor Mark Paniccia as he moves to the sunny west coast, a casualty of the ever expanding Malibu Comics Co., where he'll be heading the licensing projects and, coincidentally, the Eternity line. Due to his departure, the Speed Racer issue will be delayed, but don't fret, next issue we take an in-depth look at *Project A-ko*, Eternity's big color release for next year put together by American manga's hardest working men, Tim Eldred and Ben Dunn. We'll also have a trivia contest with cool prizes, too.
See you next issue,
-Zip Beatty,
*Special Ed*

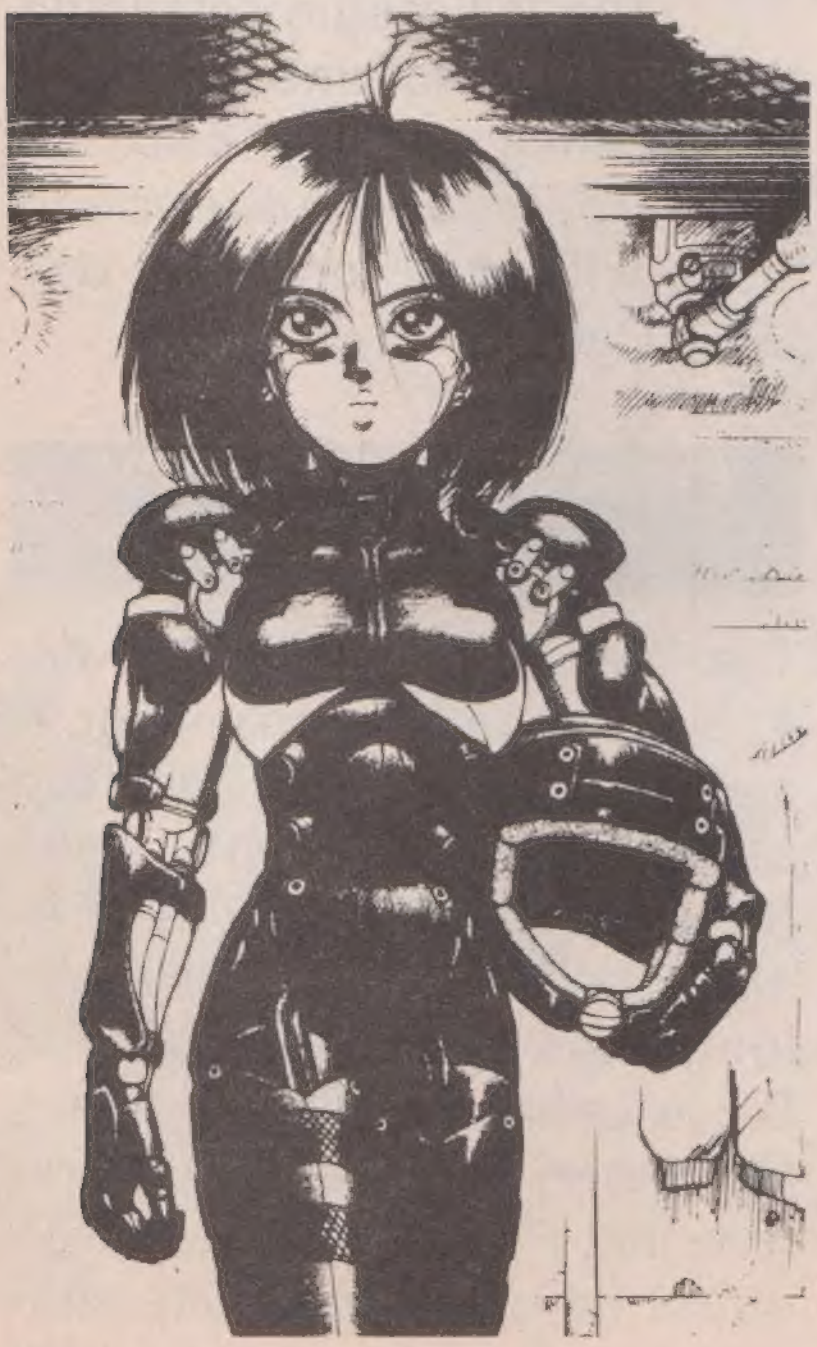
**Contributor's info:** Never send originals. Please send stats or good copies. Include your name, address and phone number. Always include an S.A.S.E. for response. Send all submissions to **Submissions Editor, Manga Newswatch, 51795 Old Mill Rd., South Bend, IN, 46637.**
*Writers-* submissions should be double spaced typed.
*Artists-* pin-ups, may be done on 8 1/2 X 11, comic shorts should be no longer than 8 pages.

# *MN* UpDate:

## *New Series for Alita (again!), Gundam comes to comics, totally different Robotech*

### Angel's back for a third installment

**Viz** Comics announced its plans to begin *Part III* of its superhit series **Battle Angel Alita** immediately following the final installment of *Part II* which will end in October. *Part III* concentrates on the following consequences of Alita's tragic love affair with Hugo. The heart broken and disillusioned Alita is nowhere to be found while her friend Ido scours the scrap yard for her whereabouts. During an accidental trip to a "motorball" rink, Ido finally finds Alita, who, much to his surprise, is one of the combatants in the motorball rink.



*Battle Angel Alita Part III* contains a poignant and profound storyline that promises to bring Alita closer to humanity and to her past while remaining the fast paced action series that readers have come to expect. *Part III* will be comprised of thirteen 32 page issues priced at $2.785 US/ $3.75 Can. and will begin with a November 16th release date.

*Battle Angel Alita* was an instant hit for **Viz** when it was released in 1992 and the new OAV series will be released this fall by **AD Vision** this fall. The videos will be based mainly on the storyline of the first two parts of the manga series featuring the fantastic cast of characters, the futuristic scrapyard planet and of course, the undaunting cyborg heroine.

### Gundam in November

**Viz** has announced that they will

be publishing a comic book adaptation of one of the most influential series in the history of Japanese animation, **MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 0083.**

Appearing in English and illustrated with actual cels from the series, *Gundam 0083* will be released November 2.

"This is a dream project for me, a real dream come true," said series translator Toshifumi Yoshida. "I've spent so many happy hours watching *Gundam*, and being involved in its translation for English speaking fans is very exciting." Yoshida, whose manga resume includes work on everything from **Studio Proteus'** *3X3 Eyes* to **Toy Press'** *Five Star Stories*, is currently working on several titles for **Viz** including *Silent Mobius, Bio-Booster Armor Guyver* and the long awaited return of *Area 88*.

*Gundam 0083* is the latest entry in the saga created by director Yoshiyuki Tomino back in 1979 with the original *Mobile Suit Gundam* television series. It features an original storyline which is somehow strangely familiar... a young, novice Federation pilot comes in contact with an obsessed Zeon mobile suit pilot (yeh, this sounds real familiar) set against a backdrop of gritty war drama and , of course, a doomed love triangle.

*Gundam 0083* was released in Japan as a thirteen volume OAV series that began in 1991. Zeon's Fading Light, the

110 minute film, was released theatrically during August '92.

**Viz** will begin releasing the thirteen volume *Gundam 0083* series monthly. Each 48 page deluxe, squarebound issue will retail for $4.95 US/ $6.50 Can.

## From the ashes of the war...

The *Invid War* may be over with #18, but the human struggle continues with a new Robotech series from **Eternity** this November, *INVID WAR AFTERMATH.* Written and penciled by long time fandom opponent Bruce Lewis and inked by Dave Lanphear, this marks the first time that Robotech will be taken out of its given continuity altogether. Straying from Jack

McKinney's *End of the Circle*, this series brings together Lunk, Lancer, Annie, Rook, Sera, Rand and a rather unrecognizable Scott Bernard.

The series is slated for a six issue story arc that takes place on post war Earth. The central locale is a once abandoned resort/casino called Belmont, now turned small city. Built by Lunk, Lancer and gang, their readjusting society comes to a screeching halt with the return of Scott Bernard. Scott's appearance is meant to shock the readers. "He's the pivotal point of for the first six issues," said Dave Lanphear, "He goes through a change which all the other characters will revolve."

Sera also plays an important role. "Sera has become a kind of symbol. People in the city are drawn toward her," says Lewis.

Series editor, Mark Paniccia added, "Fans will either hate this or love it. I can't see an in-between. So far, the initial reaction to advanced peek-a-boo copies has been very positive, the main complement being that it's a story about people, rather than mecha and robots."

To make things even more different, all the protoculture is gone and wait until you find out what the new focus is on. **Eternity** doesn't want to spoil any surprises so their not giving away to much info right now, just a promise that it will be a Robotech like no other and that it's a good jumping point for new readers

# *Newswatch Newsnotes:*

**Way** back in issue #2 we spotlighted the Dark Horse/Studio Proteus series, Venus Wars by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko, one of Japan's foremost creators of popular animation and comics. At the time, we also wanted to do a review of the video but due to conflicting schedules, the tape wasn't ready for release. At this moment, both subtitled ($39.95) and dubbed ($29.95) versions are available from U.S. Manga Corps. and we would like to say we highly recommend them! Also, we'd like to say that GAL FORCE 2 is available, so check it out. **NINJA** HIGH SCHOOL Yearbook by Eternity (not to be mistaken with Antarctic Press' version) features stories and art from artists that Ben Dunn has been cultivating during his trips to Japan. He's been currently scouting for new talent and his travels have not been disappointing. The book should be on the shelves now and is 32 pages, retailing at $2.50 US. Don't forget to look for something special coming from Antarctic Press regarding Project A-Ko.

Eternity is doing the four issue mini-series, but Ben and co have a few surprises up their sleeves for additional fun. **The** winner for the Robotech character contest has been announced. It's Jo Ann Faustino for her character Rebecca Nicks. Not only does her character become a member of the cast, but she'll also receive an original illustration by the Waltrips. Six runner ups will receive signed editions of Invid War Aftermath.

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bruce lewis.david lanhear

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# Project A-kon and Fandom in the Lone Star State

## or why it's so big

*By Robert W. Gibson*

Yeah, anyone involved in anime and manga fandom in this country for any length of time knows how it started in California and spread to the rest of the U.S., until practically every major metropolitan area had a Cartoon/Fantasy Organization chapter in the mid-80's. By the time the Robotech phenomenon had converted to a lot of the older media sf and fantasy fans (and brought in quite a few new ones), most sf/fantasy and comic book conventions had one or two vid rooms showing the stuff. This in turn, exposed a lot of the Robotechies to anime they hadn't had access to before. Thus anime fandom grew from a small enclave of fans in Southern California into a fandom country all its own, which now supports several magazines (including this one), a dozen or more translated manga or manga-inspired comic titles every month, a bunch of video and film companies which can now make a profit by subtitling/dubbing anime for the American theatre and video market, and best of all, that phenomenon which signals that a fandom has truly arrived: the national (and international) fandom convention.

It is a tribute to the industriousness and perva-

siveness(and I suppose some of the more cynical among us would, our captialistic nature) of California fandom that not one, but TWO fairly large international anime and manga conventions were held this year. With the amazing number of anime and manga fans in that area of the country, one tends to wonder why it took so long. By all accounts, AnimeCon (which was billed for awhile as "the first anime convention if the U.S.") two years ago was a rousing success, as was Anime Expo last year. Despite a slow start, it seems anime conventions in California will be viable for quite some time.

But, then the fact that an anime convention can succeed is no surprise to those of us in Texas, because some of us have been to no less than 7 of them over the past 10 years: and like those Texas conventions, anime fandom here in the Lone Star State has been thriving for as long as any outside of that original group in California.

Like many other fandoms in this country, how and where Texas fandom started depends on who you talk to. From people I've spoken with, the people most responsible are Mike Wright, Liz Frizzell and Derek Wakefield. Mike started the Cartoon/ Fantasy Organization (C/FO) in Austin and got Ben (Ninja High Schoo) Dunn interested. Ben recalls driving up to Austin from San Antonio to attend meetings even though he was too young to leagally drive at the time. Liz started th C/FO in Houston and Derek founded the Earth Defense Command (EDC) as a Star Blazers/Yamato club in Dallas. For the most part, due mainly to the miles involved, the three clubs remained seperate, though the two C/FO's were somewhat connected through the "national" organization based in Los Angeles. Ben Dunn, Brian Sutton and myself started the C/FO-San Antonio and Ben founded Antarctic Press (still going strong as of this writing) and through AP publications such as *Ninja High School*, Ben became somewhat of a statewide celebrity. Because of the variety of programming and the friendly nature of the group, C/FO-San Antonio meetings regularly began drawing fans from Austin, College Station and Houston (200 miles away).

Meanwhile, the EDC began growing rapidly and courting out-of-state members and the amine fan base in Dallas grew to the largest such group in

the state. Together with two newly formed Fort Worth clubs, the fandom in the metroplex grew large enough to give Lea and Mark Hernandez the idea of throwing a convention dedicated to anime.

Earlier, in 1983, the Hernandez's had staged a one-day affair which they called YamatoCon. Programmng consisted of the entire run of Star Blazers and they even managed a small dealer's room. In 1986, however, YamatoCon 2 (another one-day convention) drew about 200 fans and programming was more varied, with another dealer's room and a small art show. The next year, inspired by the success of the two YamatoCons, they joined with the efforts of a few other area fans in running a two-day convention called AniMagic. Upon contacting Harmony Gold, they flew in Aline Leslie ( the voice actress for Lisa "Robotech" Hayes) to be the offical guest. The video room showed a large variety of animation from Japan and other countries, there was another dealer's room, a few contests, and a party.

A few years later, Lea and Mark left for the West Coast, where Lea now works as a professional in both the comic book and prose fields. Inspired by the success of the three previous conventions in Dallas, Meri and David Hazelwood(sp) decided to continue the tradition by starting their own convention. Project A-Kon was born.

The first A-kon was a two-day affair held in 1990 in a hotel which was being share with, among other things, a wedding reception. The dealer's room was very small and the only pro guests of note were Tex Henson (a local animator/character designer who worked on a number of Jay Ward and Disney productions), Steve Krueger (sp), who had done some artwork for Eternity Comics' *Chaser Platoon,* and Trish Ledeaux(sp), then editor of AniMag. A tribute to the strength of Texas fandom, attendence at the first A-Kon was far greater than either Meri or David had expected they decided that there would be another, larger A-Kon in 1991.

True to their word, 1991's A-Kon was larger, at a better hotel and had more guests. Among the latter were Adam (Dirty Pair) Warren, Tim (Broid, Captian Harlock) Eldred, John and Jason

TWO OF MAN'S GREATEST FASCINATIONS

# DINOSAUR *Bikini*

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(Robotech) Waltrip, Ben Dunn and Toren (Studio Proteus) Smith. The costume contest was added, along with a brunch with the pros and alot of fannish activity with producers of parody films and the continuation of what had become an informal tradition: a no-holds barred watergun fight after hours.

The A-Kon in 1992 was a bit small than the previous version (though much larger than the first) at yet another hotel with a less extensive guest list. Still, it drew anime and manga fans from as far away as Georgia and California. Among the guests were Eldred, Dunn, Henson, and an animator associated with Ren and Stimpy. The video rooms were larger, with some fans noting that the dealer's room from A-Kon 1 would fit nicely into the largest of them.

This year's addition was the largest so far, with fans and dealers from California, Louisana, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Georgia and many other states. The guest list included Mark Paniccia (the new editor of Eternity Comics), Adam Warren, Don Messick (A voice actor with a list of credits so large that they barely them onto his page of the program guide), translators Neil Nadelman and Sue Shambaugh, and Benn Dunn, Robert DeJesus, et. all From the Antarctic Press. Dealers included Laser Perceptions, Happy Jackal Graphics ( Brian Sutton and Shon Howell, editors of various funny animal comics), Eternity Comics, Kimono My House, and AD Visions, translators/distributors of the American release of Sol Bianca and Devil Hunter Yohko. The costume contest was the largest ever, as was the water gun fight, which turned into a super squirter marathon involving over a dozen participants. The video room included a projection system and large screen, which was needed because some of the subtitles of the vids shown were pretty small.

Though not as large as the two California conventions, the people behind Project A-Kon expect to continue holding the convention each year for the forseeable future and expect it to keep growing. With the number of anime fans in Texas growing with every new subtitled and dubbed project, together with the strong history of Texas fandom, I expect that won't be a problem.

*Robert W. Gibson is a long-time animation fan. He is best known for his dedicated and excellent work on Eternity's American comic version of Captain Harlock.*

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# Guest review !
## by Dave Merrill !!

### MACROSS II - MENACE OR DISASTER

You know, I didn't ALWAYS hate Macross. Well, actually, there was a time I did hate it, but that was a long time ago, when the Robotech tsunami hit the shores of North America like a platoon of Howling Commandoes turned loose on the beaches of Normandy. Back then everybody and their brother was hot for this "japanimation" thing, and their brother was hot for this Macross whatchamacallit, because it was an actual movie version of part of Robotech! So naturally, I had to endure countless screenings of 'Macross- Do You Remember Love', an experience that succeeded in deadening the Macross-Appreciation centers of my brain. I had to listen Minmay chirp her way through that "Kyun, kyun" song hundreds of times, only to be interrupted by the Zentraedi attack that would inevitably follow, over and over again. It was a good three years before I could approach that film again.

And when I did take the time to watch it again, I was impressed. Because, rhetoric aside, it's a great film. It has great animation, a great plot, great characters, great music, great direction— it's great! It's a film that was obviously put together with both real skill and a good deal of love for the medium, and it's obvious to see why it became the monster hit it was.

Which of course leads me to Macross II, which stinks to high Heaven like a truckload of hogs stuck on the Interstate on a hot Louisiana afternoon. The plot resembles a manila-paper shotgun target, the animation is barely OAV standard, which isn't saying much, and the music is instantly forgettable. The characters would be forgettable, except they're too pathetic to forget. Let's see, we have the 'hotshot young reporter who gets a hard lesson in reality'. We have the 'tough you female combat pilot who's had to fight her way to the top'. We have the usual bevy of interchangeable supporting characters

straight from Central Casting. And of course, we have the beautiful alien girl, who ignores millions of years of evolution and societal pressure to fall instantly in love with a total stranger. And what is it with this 'get naked to fight the enemy' thing? It was exploitive in Iczer-One, but that was to be expected. Here, it's just pathetic.

And what is the deal with this " reverse Minmay Attack" thing? Let me get this straight. The 'culture' attack worked originally because the Zentraedi had never been exposed to singing or music, right? So I can go along with the Minmay attack working for 15 years, unlikely as it may seem. But how in Carl Macek's name does work against humans from Earth, who have been exposed to music all their lives?? Huh? I don't get it.

For me, the most offensive thing about Macross II is it's very existence. I mean, for the Macross movie to be so way incredibly cool, and even Flashback 2012 to be so trippy and full of teases and promises abut something really big on the horizon, we were expecting something really fantastically earth-shaking from anything titled "Macross II". And, instead, we get six volumes of the same old boring OAV drivel that the studios have been stamping out for the past five years. It has none of the innovation, none of the beauty nor the sense of wonder and most all the balls of the original BALLS of the original Macross. Instead, it's just a rehash of 80's leftovers that serves only to make us long for the glory days of anime, when there were MEN slaving behind those multiplane cameras and those cell paints— MEN (and WOMEN, of course), striving to produce timeless works of power and glory; not automations programmed to dig up the triumphs of the past, jazz them with a few million volts of electricity, and send them, zombie-like, to walk among us.

Maybe I just don't get it. Maybe in a few years, I'll find Macross II and watch it again, just for kicks, and maybe, I'll feel little more charitable towards it.

But I doubt it.

**CITYHUNTER THE MOVIE: DROP WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING AND GO SEE IT RIGHT NOW, IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, BECAUSE IT'S GREAT.**

So, like everything else in my life, it happened all at once. First, I caught a 15-second TV ad for something called "Cityhunter: on a rental tape of Japanese TV anime. Intrigued, I look closer. Seemed like a Chinese martial-arts epic, only with lots of guns, and Jackie Chan. I filed it in the "Too strange to exist" drawer and promptly forgot about it until the phone rang an hour later. It was Lloyd. His first words were.."There's a live-action 'Cityhunter' film." I rudely interrupted him to to say, "Starring Jackie Chan, yeah, I know.." His reply to this witty riposte was to ask if I was going to see it Saturday night.

I picked my jaw off the floor and asked him to repeat his last sentence. As the story unfolded, I resolved never to interrupt anyone again, for the "Cityhunter" starring Jackie Chan, was indeed playing in Atlanta that very weekend! Of course, it was playing at midnight at some theater no one had ever heard of before. We all laughed in the face of adversity. "Ha, ha," we said, piling into our cars at eleven to make our intrepid journey into the darkest suburbs of Atlanta.

After a few false stops, we found the theater, quaintly labeled 'Cinevision', located in a friendly office park. apparently it's a small screening room used to preview upcoming films for local theater-chain owners, and similar business-related functions. In addition, it also hosts Chinese films every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. "Cityhunter: only happened to be latest in a long line of Hong Kong productions to hit Atlanta via Cinevision.

So we paid our six bucks (five for students) and planted our buttocks firmly into the plush, very comfortable theater seats, secure in the knowledge that soon Jackie Chan would appear and "rock our world."

We were not disappointed. Jackie is, of course, the greatest action film actor in the world. As Ryo Saeba, the Cityhunter, Jackie was in rare form.

The movie followed the Japanese storyline fairly well, with the addition of lots of kung fu scenes. It was a Jackie Chan film after all! Thank God it was subtitled instead of dubbed. Ryo is

basically his lecherous self, Kaori is his long-suffering assistant(they do the hammer joke— twice!), even Saeko is there, armed with literally hundreds of automatic weapons and a top-heavy, comic-relief partner. the plot deals with Ryo and Kaori as they chase a young Japanese heiress, and everybody winds up on a cruise ship that's hijacked by the usual evil terrorists who are actually just regular old criminals with any particular political affiliations ( but not before a fantastic skateboard sequence. Don't try this at home kids!) Lots of spectacular gunplay, blazing kung-fu action, sight gags, wall-to-wall cute Chinese babes, daring rescues and escapes, patented Type Saeba lechery, a Streetfighter parody (!!) an Card Tricks for Hell make this an extremely enjoyable film for anime fans, Jackie Chan fans, action-film fans, and everybody else who ever existed on the face of the Earth. It is indeed, the best live-action version of a previously animated work I have ever seen.

So of course, we went back the next week to see whatever was on the bill, which turned out to be a fantastically cool historical kung-fu epic titled "Once Upon a Time in China III," starring Jet Lee (younger and balder than Jackie, but just as cool). Tsui Hark is genius who directed the film. The film after that was "The Heroic Trio," a feminist-superhero-political allegory-kung fu-film-noir thriller that stars the fantastic Maggie Chung. What a babe. She later played the Sharon Stone part in a Chinese spoof of "Basic Instinct."

Behind it all is the thrill of sitting down to see a movie that you know next to nothing about, and having it turn to be fantastic! Living in the media-saturation zone as we do, where every film, TV show, and record is advertised, reviewed, referred to, and ripped-off till there is no surprise left! The anticipation and uncertainty that accompanies seeing sight-unseen movies is such a unique sensation, it's almost addictive!

So, anyway, now I'm hooked on these Chinese films. They make the greatest movies! Go see one, OK?

# The Adam Warren Interview

*According to his standard "convention bio" entry, Adam Warren describes himself as "your standard-issue manga ripoff maggot, busily engaged in cultural kleptomania-for-profit".*

*He's 26 years old but admits that he looks "at least ten years older" (working in comics can do that to you).*

*After years of high living in such exotic places as California and New Jersey, he now abides in a Walden-like retreat deep in the backwoods of New England. There, provisioned only with the most essential of supplies (cases of Guiness Stout, scads of Chow Yun Fat movies, and a collection of unbuilt Dirty Pair model kits), he nurses his black-hearted plans to "Rule the comics field with an iron hand!" He confesses that "Of course, every bozo in comics thinks this way... at least I'm honest enough to admit it, right?"*

*Well, our own Tim McLaughlin got Adam to "admit" a little more in this extensive and in-depth interview.*

**"I had grown thoroughly sick of doing artwork and was ready to quit..."**

**TM: It is "rumored" that you attended the Kubert School.**

AW: Yes. Starting in 1985, I staggered through the famous three-year "comics curriculum" at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in beautiful Dover, New Jersey. By halfway into my first year, however, I had grown thoroughly sick of doing art work and was ready to quit the school. At this point, I first encountered, and was entranced by anime and manga, which revitalized my interest in working on comics. And foremost among the anime I saw was the Dirty Pair, as you might guess.

**TM: On videotape?**

AW: Yes. The Dirty Pair TV series was the first thing to grab my attention, but I later developed interest in other anime, such as the Miyazaki films, the animated adaptations of Takahashi's work, and so on. Eventually, I began "reading" manga, which had a more direct bearing on my would-be "career" in the comics field.

From that time to the present, a string of manga writer-artists became my greatest influences. Strictly in terms of artwork, the mangaka who specialize in the so-called "women 'n' mecha" style, like Shiro Masamune, Knichi Sonoda, Kosuke Fujishima and so on, are my obvious "personal gods." I'm also fond of other creators more for their writing and storytelling , such as Rumiko Takahashi, Fujihiko Hosono, Otomo Katsuhiro and, last but not least, Tatuha Egawa, who created the deranged but incredibly innovative manga, BE FREE, probably my all-time favorite comic, period.

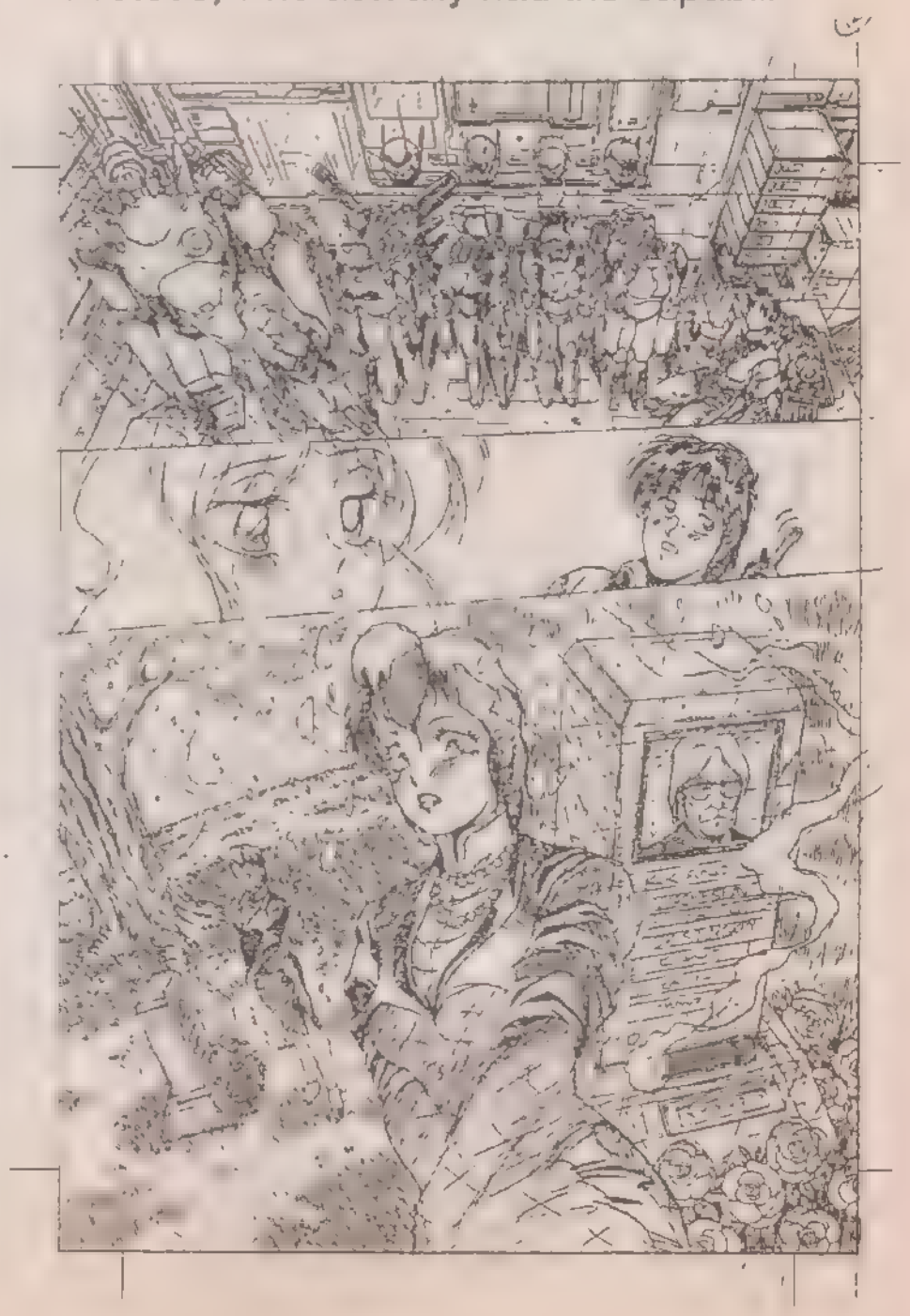
**TM: You're known for sneaking anime characters in your backgrounds.**

AW: Well, I used to do that quite a bit, both to give diehard anime fans something to look for, and also because I found it simpler to pad out crowd scenes with easily referenced pre-existing characters than to make up new ones. Alas, you won't see much of that in the DIRTY PAIR: SIM HELL miniseries, since it doesn't have any crowd scenes as such... unless you count the "harem" sequence, with its dozens of Kei and Yuri clones.

**TM: How did you get involved in the official DP thing?**

AW: After seeing the Dirty Pair TV series in early 1986, I perceived that the Lovely Angels were in desperate need of an appearance in comics, and immediately started the first of a number of extremely lame DP short stories. After a while, I made the incredibly naive decision to look into "getting dem rights from Japan," to do an official American comics version of the Dirty Pair.

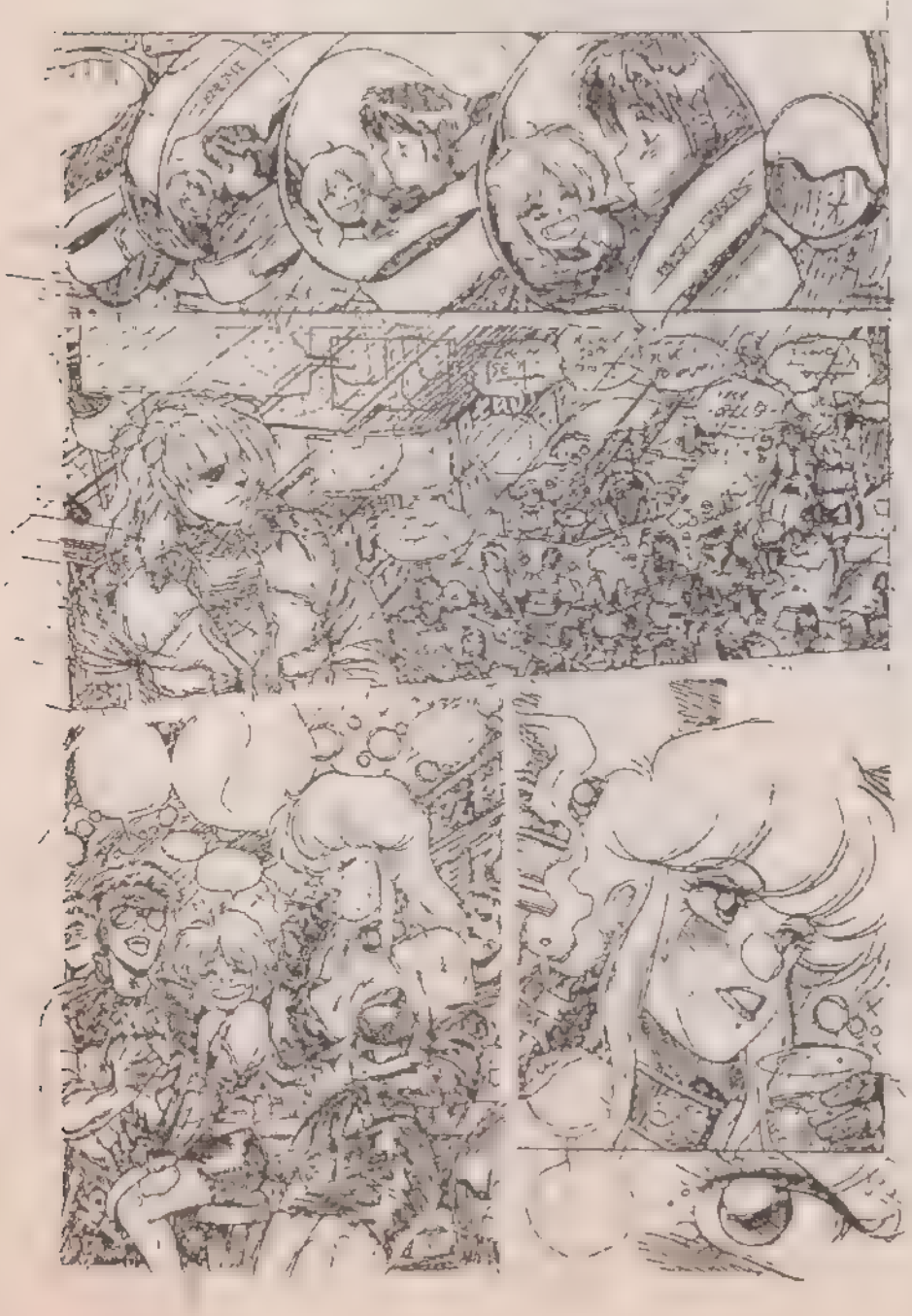
After a year of disappointing contacts that led nowhere, I eventually got in touch with Toren Smith at Studio Proteus, who actually had the capabili-



ty , and track record, of negotiating with the Japanese. I worked up a portfolio of Dirty Pair illustrations and comics pages as a proposal, and Toren took it to Studio Nue, the company headed by Haruka Takachiho, the SF author who created the DP. Eventually, through skilled business machinations, Studio Proteus landed rights to do an American Dirty Pair comic.

**TM: How did you develop your style?**

AW: I tend to acquire new influences periodically, both in writing and drawing, which hopefully makes for a process of gradual improvements, or at least changes, in my work. I usually experiment with certain story telling devices or art techniques, and then incorporate them into my work if I think they're successful ... or drop them, if they aren't.



For example, on the SIM HELL mini-series, I feel that my average panel count per page has become too high, which can be somewhat "wearying" to the reader's eye. So, for the upcoming Bubblegum Crisis project, I'm using a greater variation in the panel count, hopefully for greater visual impact... though, I hasten to add, I have no intention of becoming a "two-panel-per-page" artist, as some of the "big name" dudes are.

**TM: Were you always interested in writing comics, too?**

**"I've never had the slightest interest in being strictly an artist..."**

AW: Well, this is a sensitive subject with me. In the first place, I got into comics in general, and the Dirty Pair in particular, to write as well as draw, and that's what I've done from the start, I've never had the slightest interest in being strictly an artist, and would probably quit the field if that were my only option.

This may strike some readers as odd, but I have no innate love of drawing whatsoever. In fact, much of the time, I actually despise the grunt work of penciling and inking not to mention the even more tedious task of screentoning. I'm proud of the finished artwork, most of the time, but take no pleasure in the process of doing it.

Then again, people from my New England background are generally expected to loathe their jobs, anyway. I'm very glad that at least I enjoy the writing and laying-out of each issue, the accomplishment of which is the only reason I bother staying in comics. Of course, I have few marketable skills outside this field, and would end up with a "McJob," at best, if I renounced "sequential storytelling." But I'll burn that bridge when I come to it.

Does that sound whiny? Obnoxious? Maybe so. But the point is, don't refer to me as just being and artist, in the penciler-inker sense of the term. That pisses me off, big time. As I heard at a con once, "It's 'writer-artist'

to you, fanboy. "not that I'm implying that I'm actually a decent writer, by the way ...but nonetheless, writing is, and has always been, part of my job.

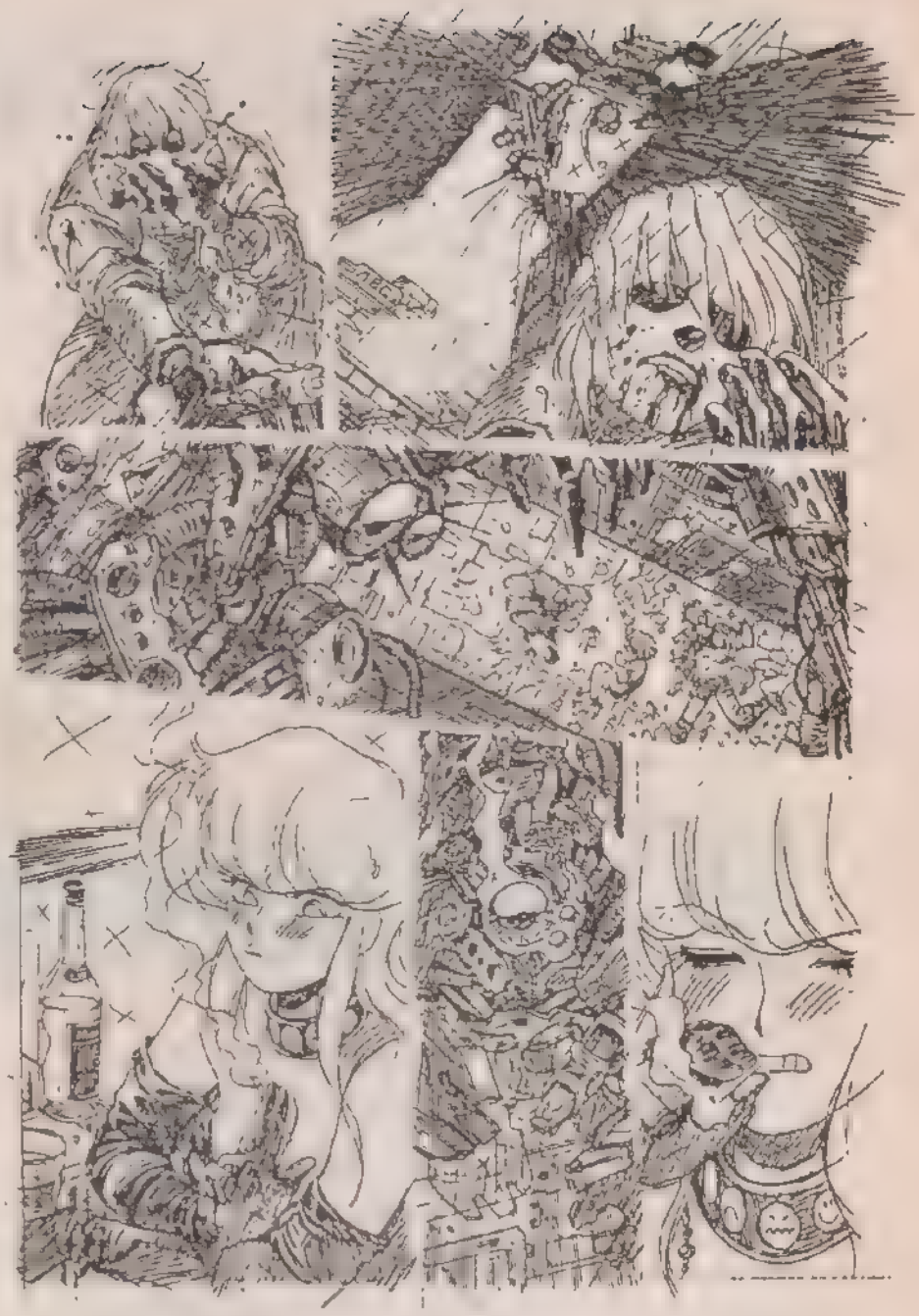
Currently, it's in vogue to lambaste the writer-artist (or wartrist, " as some Marvel hack put it), due primarily to some of the intensely lame writing of certain superhero artists. But, to rehash the same old argument we've all seen a hundred times, such criticism skips over some of the better examples, like Peter Bagge, Dan Clowes, the Brothers Hernandez, Scott McCloud, and so on... not to mention some of the dazzling Japanese writer-artists. Alas, though, I'm, closer in writing skill to the Image "wartists" than to any of the illustrious names above. Oh well.

On the other hand, I wouldn't want to be strictly a writer, as their lot often isn't all that pleasant, either. For every time I've heard big company happytalk about the "synergy" between artist and writer, I've also heard many more complaints from writers about artists plunging way, way "off-script." Of course, I've also heard penciler bleating about being treated merely as "wrists" whose only purpose is to fulfill a separate writer's "artistic vision."

The only safe course, for me at least, is to both write and draw. Writing outside of comics isn't an option for me, since my prose is truly and stunningly god awful. Walter Williams, I ain't. But comics' distinct combination of writing and artwork, at least, is within my ability (more or less).

**TM: Do you reference from Walter Jon Williams?**

AW: Well, I do have an consuming interest in all things pseudo-cyberpunk. In terms of the now-pretty-much-moribund cyperpunk scene, my favorite writers were stalwarts like Williams, Gibson, Sterling, Swanwick, Effinger, Shirley and so on. I've always



crammed tons of obscure references to these guys, ad nauseum, into the Dirty Pair stories.

Then again, the DP comic is often a big pile of obscure references, sort of a low-rent, and less funny, version of "Mystery Science 3000." Kudos to the handful of fans that actually notice most of this stuff...

**"...the DP comic is often a big pile of obscure (cyberpunk) references..."**

**TM: Where did DP disappear to all that time?**

AW: Well, it's no mystery. Dark Horse, unlike Eclipse can afford to pay me to complete most of a mini-series well before any of it is published. This makes possible the release of the finished books on a monthly basis, which was certainly never possible before. You'll recall that during the third Dirty Pair series, there were unscheduled gaps of months between some of the issues, which is far worse than the current status of long waits between indi-

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vidual mini-series.

There's no other way that anything I produce can come out on anything close to a monthly basis; having to plot, layout, script, pencil and, even worse, ink and screen-tone a book tends to take me a great deal of time. Some projects coming up, however might reduce the time I have to spend on the artwork. That's definitely the case with the new Bubblegum Crisis series anyway.

**TM: Yes, we reported that you were working on that. What's the status on it?**

AW: Well, the full title of the project is BUBBLEGUM CRISIS: GRAND MAL, and it's a four-issue color mini-series coming out from Dark Horse at some point in the first half of '94. I'm writing and penciling it, and the slated inker is Rober DeJesus, known for his cool work on SMALL BODY NINJA HIGH SCHOOL and other Antarctic books. Joe Rosas, a fellow Kubert student and master colorist on various Marvel titles, will be facing the difficult task of coloring this sucker.

The story, a prequel of sorts, is set just before the Bubblegum Crisis OAV series. The Knight Sabers run afoul of a complex anti-Genom plot, resulting in the usual degree of mechanized mayhem you expect with BGC. Hopefully, GRAND MAL should serve to introduce non-fans to the BGC milieu, and have some new elements for those already acquainted with the Knight Sabers.

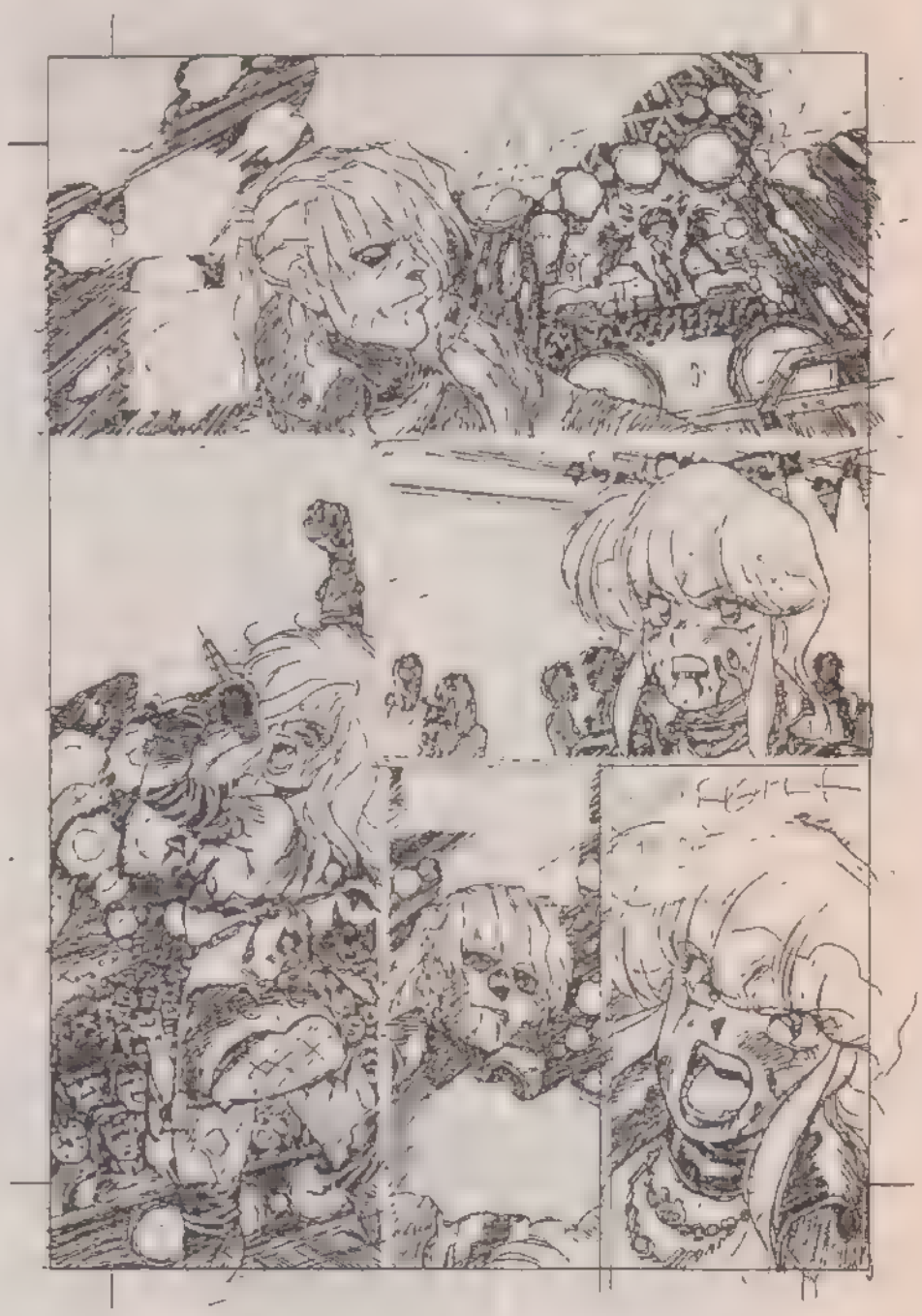
**TM: Are you staying true to original BGC designs?**

AW: Unlike the Dirty Pair series, for which I had to create entirely new character and mecha designs, I will be following established Bubblegum Crisis designs as closely as possible.

Given that BGC's character designer, the many-talented Kenichi Sonoda, is still one of my primary artistic influences, staying "on character" to the BGC material shouldn't be too big of a problem.

**TM: How did you deal with redesigning from the Sunrise characters?**

AM: The important point here is that Studio Proteus acquired the rights to do a comics version of the Dirty Pair directly from Haruka Takachiho's company, Studio Nue, and not from



Sunrise, the company that produced the animated version. We couldn't use the Sunrise character designs, which proved to be a blessing in the long run, since I wasn't strait -jacketed into drawing the Angels a certain way, I had more room to maneuver, artistically.

**TM: What did you think of the Mughi designs?**

**"We couldn't use the Sunrise character designs, which turned out to be a blessing in the long run..."**

AW: Actually, I wouldn't mind using the animated DP's version of Mughi, since any fool can draw such a "fluff-ball with eyes." The Mughi that Lela Dowling designed for the American comic is structured like a giant cougar, which is far more difficult to depict. That's especially true when, like me, you're virtually incapable of drawing animals in the first place.

Incidentally, this is the reason why poor ol' Mughi makes only cameo appearances in the book, when he appears at all. Maybe someday, if I change his design to something that's easier for me to draw, he might play a greater role in the DP's adventures.

**TM: So what's this I hear about a possible Marvel deal?**

AW: Yes. It's still extremely tentative, but I'm , pitching an one-shot X-Force project to Marvel. They seem to have liked my character designs for the proposal, but may have problems with the plot. If this unlikely longshot of a proposal actually happens, I'll be writing and penciling the story in the so-called "manga style" interestingly enough.

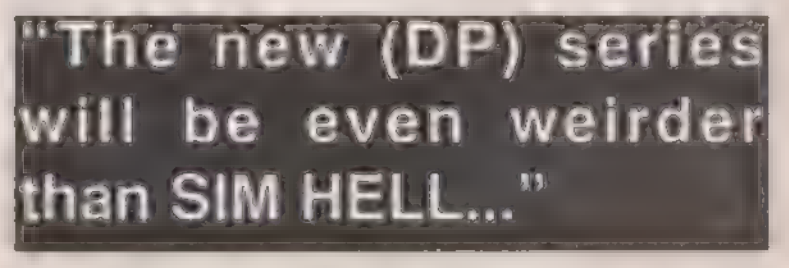
**TM: Manga style in the epitomy of mainstream comics?**

AW: In part. Unfortunately, it seems that only a few isolated elements of manga have been incorporated into mainstream comics, such as the ubiquitous speed lines you see today in most pieces of superhero dreck. However, I think the most important elements that can be gleaned from the better Japanese comics are thrifty storytelling techniques. Whether dealing with action scenes or quieter moments, the best manga artists tend to use far more innovative and interesting techniques than you'll find in most American comics (the Scott McCloud book, Understanding Comics, gets into this subject a bit).

On the other hand, it's important to keep in mind that the majority of Japanese comics are just as hackneyed, unimaginative and formulaic as their American counterparts. You have to sift through a hell of a lot of manga' and anime, too, to find the "good stuff." Just because a comic is from Japan, it isn't automatically "all good and deserving of all my love" (gratuitous Act of Contrition reference for all my fellow lapsed Catholics out there).

**TM: Is DP the only thing that interests you?**

AW: No, not at all. But I do, most of the time, enjoy working on the Dirty Pair because the characters and back ground are very flexible. At any given time, you can handle the Angels as humorously, or as seriously, as you wish. The basic structure of the DP concept can accommodate basically anything, from hard SF, annoying sarcasm and disturbing violence to colorfully twisted characters and slapstick comedy. Most projects wouldn't allow




you that kind of freedom. But yes, down the road, I do intend to work on material besides the Dirty Pair.

First, though after BUBBLEGUM CRISIS: GRAND MAL, I'm planning to do another DP miniseries, as previously mentioned, with the tentative title DIRTY PAIR: FATAL, BUT NOT SERIOUS. That's taken, oddly enough, from a P.J. O'Rourke quote: "What ails Poland is, as the Poles say, 'fatal, but not serious.'"

The new series will be even weirder than SIM HELL, though it'll definitely be easier to follow. Among its sparkling story elements are: a murderously uninhibited version of Yuri, the return of reporter Cory Emerson, an almost insane degree of chaos and destruction (cities in flames! Whole systems rendered uninhabitable!) , a look at the twisted cult following the "Lovely Angels have inspired, and lastly, the death of one of the lead characters! Hep, or what? (This magazine's cover features the first illo from the upcoming series, by the way!)

Also, in all likelihood, this Dirty Pair mini-series will be in color.

**TM: What possessed you to do that? Not that I think anyone will complain.**

AW: Alas, yes, I've decided to go to color because of recent problem with the black & white format. For one thing, I've been having difficulties with the screen-tone reproduction in the B &W SIM HELL mini-series. Also, I've grown tired of the monstrously time consuming process of applying the screen-tone myself. Tomoko Saito, the sickeningly talented individual who used to handle this thankless task, wasn't available to do most of SIM HELL, so the job fell to me.

Years ago, when I was still a knee-jerk Japanophile, I had a fanatical drive to work only in "monochrome," since "that's the way the manga dudes do it." Now, I've discovered that I'm a great deal more ambivalent about staying in B &W when doing so adds weeks of work to my schedule... and, more practically, limits the sales figures I can attain.

So, it's "world of color, HO!" from now on, I guess. In any event, the Bubblegum Crisis series will be serving as a test bed for color techniques I plan to use on future projects. hopefully, any problems involved with working in color will be resolved before I get to the next Kei and Yuri epic.

**TM: What other projects do you have in the works beyond DP?**

AW: After the fifth Dirty Pair miniseries, I'm looking forward to a bizarre little project featuring Shasti and Deirdre, who were respectively villain and victim in the second DP series. Kei and Yuri won't be in this story, which is too nihilistic and darkly humorous to suit them anyway. Basically, this is a twisted "character study" that quickly degenerates into sickening violence, while offering story elements that should offend practically everyone! Yay!

**TM: You attended Anime America this year. What are your impressions?**

AW: Actually, I enjoyed it quite a bit. I ran into the usual gang of cool people I see during convention season, as well as making some new acquaintances... in other words, an actual positive con experience! Wow! Idol singer Megumi Hayashibara's "convention concert" was certainly a new twist, by the way. It's vaguely frightening to see that much kawaii up close and personal. But I soon discovered that I hadn't downed enough Anchor Steam to be able to sit through her Minky Momo song, performed in character, no less!"

**"I'm a great deal more ambivalent about staying in black and white when doing so ads weeks to my schedule..."**

But that's not such a bizarre musical experience, compared to an incident I recall from the first AnimeCon. While camped out in the hotel bar, I heard the lounge's DJ cue up "Knya Wa Hurricane" (from BGC,of course) and proudly announce, "This one's for all you enema fans!" Wonderful.

Anyway, I always like to visit northern California ("NoCal,"right?), where I used to live and work, once upon a time. Years after relocating to my aesthetic, not to mention monastic, retreat in New England, I still enjoy the occasional trip to the sunny "left coast."

**TM: Did you get a chance to meet Takachibo?**

AW: Actually, I did meet several of the Japanese guests, including the always godlike Kenichi Sonoda and the Dirty Pair's very creator, prizewinning SF author Haruka Takachiho.

I was under the impression that Takachiho disliked my version of the Dirty Pair, an impression acquired fourth-hand, or worse, from the usual chatty circles of Otaku gossip.

Actually, the only "negative" thing he's said about the American comic was that, circa the first mini-series, it was inappropriate for the Japanese market. Given the rather different state of the comics' artwork currently, he though it could now, only theoretically, mind you, "fly" in Japan. Not that there are any plans for a Japanese release of my DP stuff, believe me...

Anyway, in short, Takachiho-sama, that 'bronzed, jet-setting playboy" as Toren once described him, was quite the dude. So there.

Speaking of fan gossip and such, there's somewhat of a misconception that, when the Dirty Pair comic first came out, we were absolutely deluged with negative reaction from what my former editor, Ted Burke, dubbed "fundamentalist fans" of the DP. Actually, I did see a number of critical letters from time to time, but they were a vanishingly small fraction of the mail the book received.

The process will be starting all over again, I suppose with the Bubblegum Crisis miniseries, but with a slightly different dynamic this time. Unlike the American DP comic, my rendition of BGC has to adhere fairly closely to the look, at least, of the original. But given how strongly the tone on Bubblegum Crisis varies from video to video, I'm rather less worried about how my version's actual story will to over...

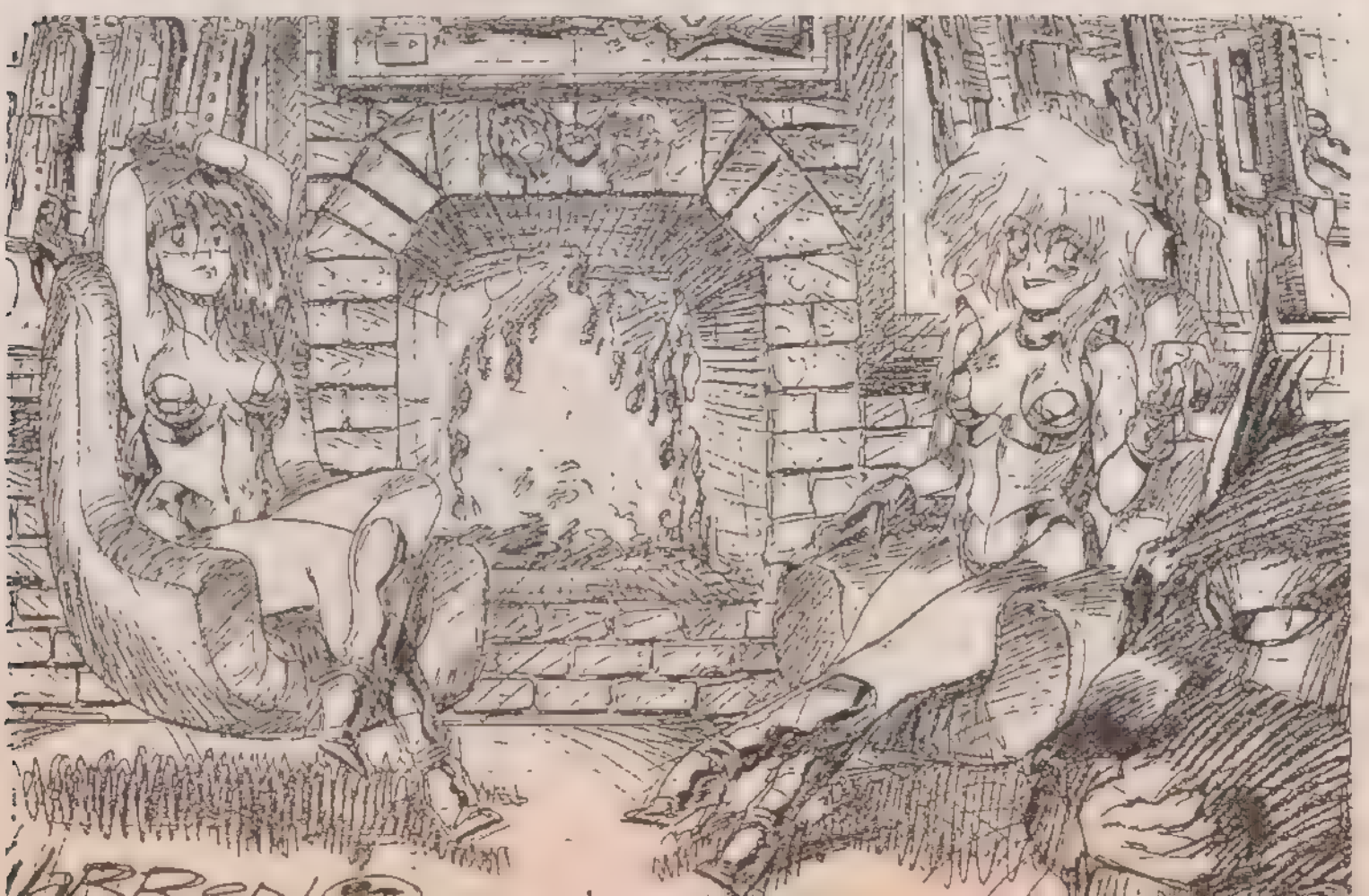
The truth is, in general I'm not all that concerned about reaction to the work I do. I'm not in comics strictly to get positive affirmation , or to be "RECOGNIZED FOR MY TRUE GENIUS!!!" by fandom in general. Glowingly positive reaction is certainly nice, though I'm particularly interested by , say, letters, complimentary OR critical, that actually discuss what happened in a particular issue of the comic. As opposed to yet another detailing of someone's "dream date with kei.." I feel differently about the latter bit if I had actually created the Lovely Angels, maybe... or maybe not.

**TM: Do you have any words of wisdom for aspiring comics professional?**

AW: If anyone out there wants to get into comics simply for the imagined benefits and thrilling adulation on "comics pro" status, I would recommend that you find some other, more lucrative, pursuit. The reward of comics work, whether financial, emotional or otherwise, generally aren't all that great. But if you are actually saddled with the powerful, obsessive drive to do that ol' "sequential storytelling," then maybe you too can carry on in the face of incredibly long working hours, serious financial insecurity and numbing obscurity.

And if you think that sounds obnoxious or embittered, believe me, I've heard much worse from fellow professionals less fortunate than I. While I've had the luxury of essentially doing what I've always wanted to do most, people in or out of the comics field aren't that lucky.

End of lecture.



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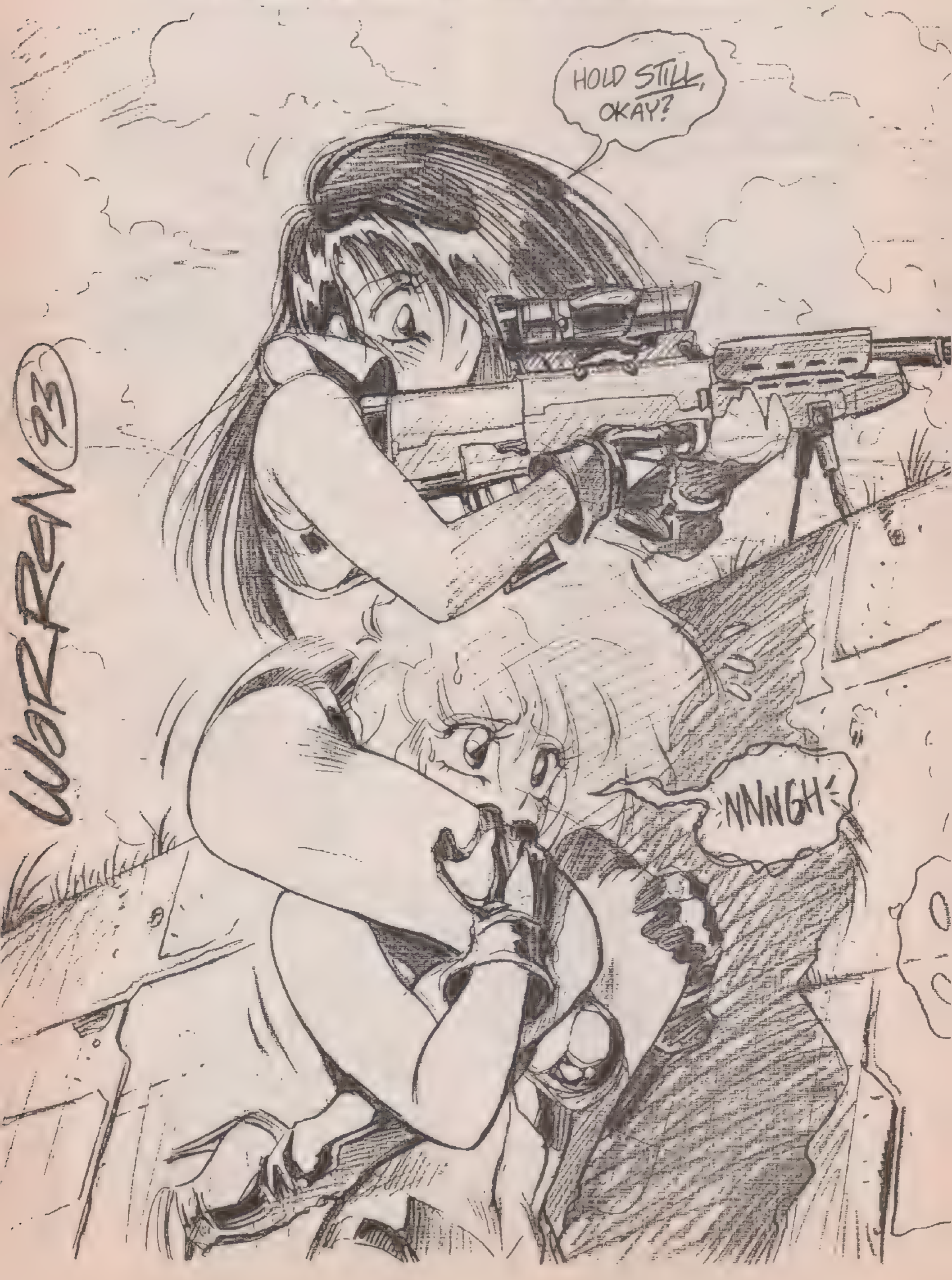

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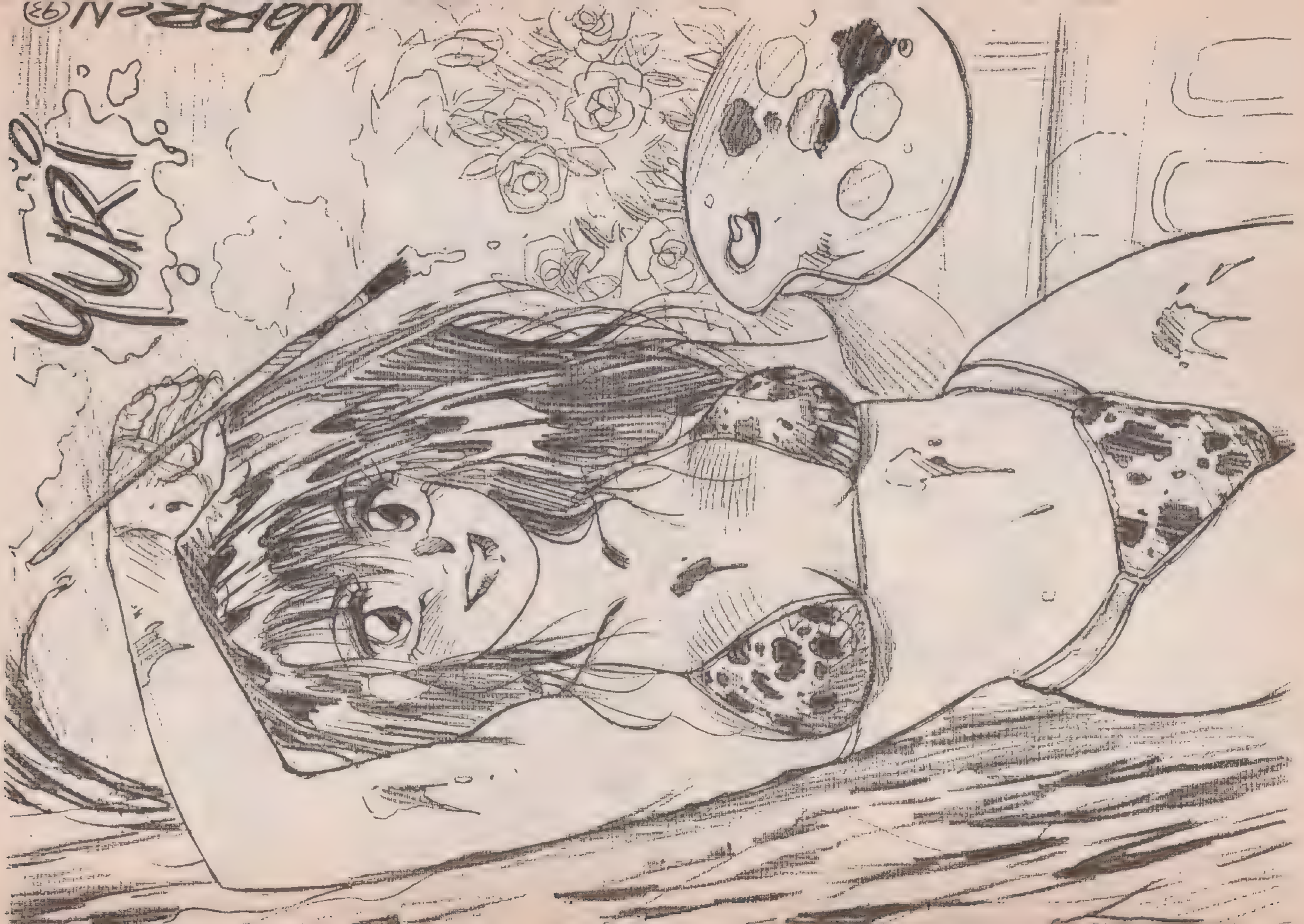
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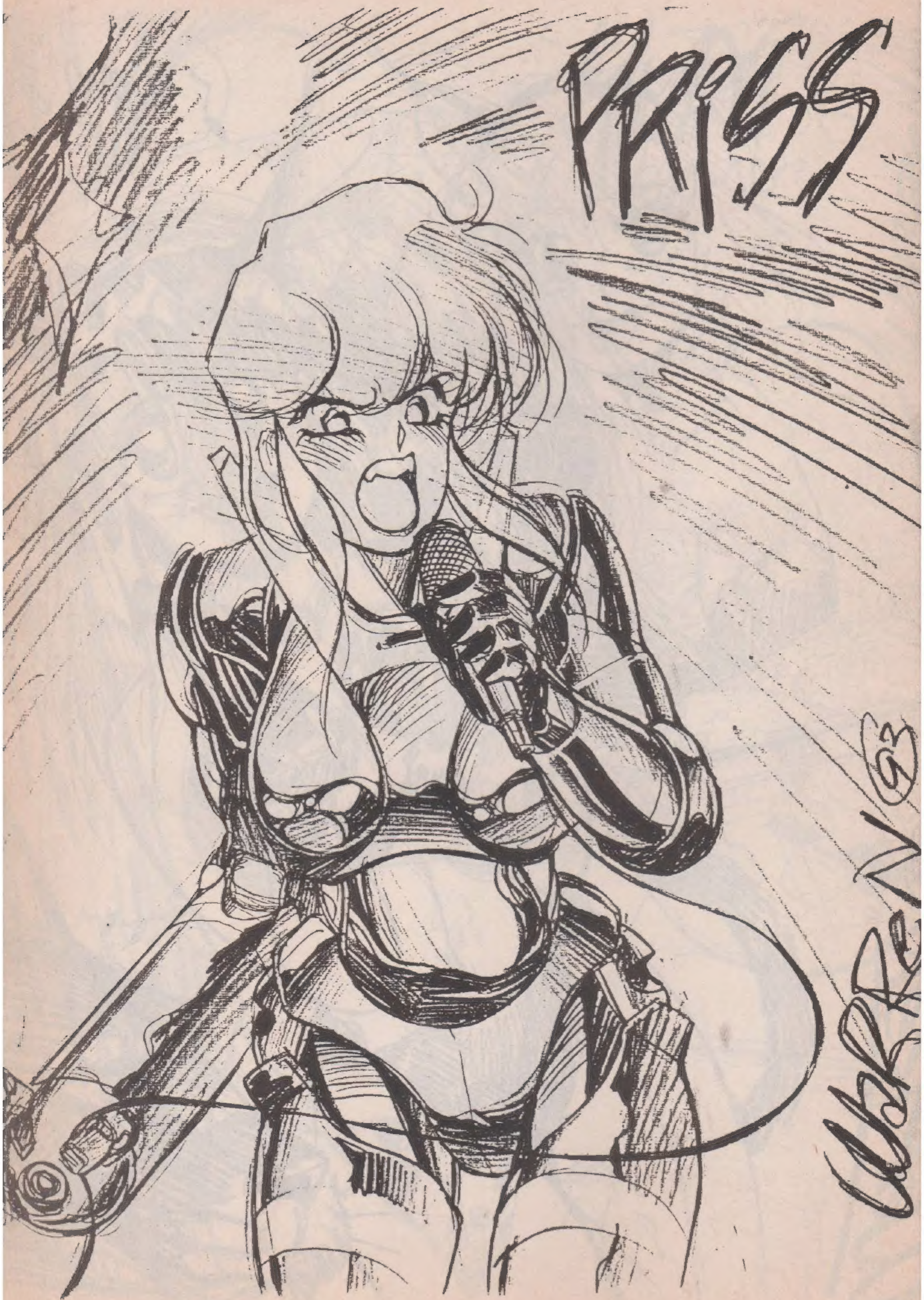
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